

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /026 W

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R 231340Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3186

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

S E C R E T TEHRAN 5168

EXDIS

E.O. 1#952: GDS

TAGS: MASS, LE, IR

SUBJECT: LEBANESE REQUEST FOR ARMS FROM IRAN

REF: STATE 143867

1. MET WITH LEBANESE AMBASSADOR AL-KHALIL JULY 22 AT HIS REQUEST FOR GENERAL DISCUSSION OF LEBANESE ARMS REQUEST. ON ARRIVAL AT AL-KHALIL'S RESIDENCE FOUND FORMER LEBANESE PRESIDENT CAMILLE CHAMOUN ALSO PRESENT. HE IS HERE UNTIL APPROXIMATELY JULY 25 ON ANOTHER OF HIS PRIVATE VISITS TO SEEK IRANIAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE.
2. AL-KHALIL AND CHAMOUN CONFIRMED WHAT WE HAD PREVIOUSLY LEARNED FROM COURT MINISTER ALAM (TEHRAN 5010) THAT LEBANON WANTED (A) M60 TANKS, (B) 155MM WEAPONS AND (C) SMALL ARMS AND AMMUNITION.
3. NOTING THAT WE HAVE NOT AS YET HAD OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS MATTER RECENTLY WITH COURT MINISTER ALAM, WHOM AL-KHALIL AND CHAMOUN HAD SEEN RECENTLY, I CONVEYED HIGHLIGHTS OF REFTTEL TO THEM. I NOTED THAT WE WERE NOT IN A POSITION TO REPLACE IN NEAR FUTURE IN IRANIAN INVENTORY M60 TANKS THAT LEBANON WAS SEEKING. WITH RESPECT TO 155MM HOWITZERS I SAID THAT THERE SEEMED

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TO BE SOME CONFUSION IN LEBANESE REQUEST TO IRANIANS

BECAUSE WEAPON WHICH WE UNDERSTOOD LEBANESE WISHED (M109A1 155MM HOWITZER) WAS NOT AS YET IN IRANIAN INVENTORY WSULE HOWITZERS IRAN POSSESSED DID NOT HAVE CHARACTERISTICS THAT LEBANON WANTED. IN OTHER WORDS HOWITZERS LEBANON WAS SEEKING IRANIANS DID NOT HAVE AND THOSE IN IRANIAN INVENTORY WERE NOT WHAT LEBANON SOUGHT. IN MY JUDGMENT IT MADE MORE SENSE FOR GOL TO PURSUE DISCUSSION REGARDING THIS WEAPON IN BEIRUT RATHER THAN TEHRAN. I MENTIONED IN THIS CONNECTION THAT OUR EMBASSY IN BEIRUT HAD RECENTLY RECEIVED DATA ON PRICE, AVAILABILITY AND SUITABILITY REGARDING M60 TANKS AND 155MM SELF-PROPELLED HOWTIZERS (PARA 3 REFTEL) AND I ASSUME THIS WAS CURRENTLY UNDER DISCUSSION WITH APPROPRIATE LEBANESE AUTHORITIES.

4. CHAMOUN EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR FOREGOING SAYING IT HAD CLARIFIED HIS THINKING REIARDING 155MM HOWITZERS WHICH HE STRESSED LEBANON NEEDED URGENTLY IN ORDER TO COPE WITH SYRIAN THREAT. HE CONCLUDED FROM THIS DISCUSSION THAT AS IN CASE OF AIRCRAFT LEBANON SHOULD NEGOTIATE DIRECTLY WITH U.S. ON THESE HOWITZERS RATHER THAN THROUGH THIRD PARTY. HOWEVER, AL-KHALIL DEMURRED SLIGHTLY POINTING OUT THAT EVEN THOUGH LOGIC OF SITUATION INDICATED LEBANON SHOULD DEAL DIRECTLY WITH U.S. AS PRIMARY SUPPLIER INSTEAD OF THROUGH IRAN, LEBANON WAS STILL INTERESTED IN GETTING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND FAVORABLE CREDIT TERMS FOR ITS MILITARY PUCHASES AND IT WAS HOPEFUL IRAN WOULD BE HELPFUL ON THIS SCORE. IN ADDITION, ON SOME ITESM THAT MIGHT BE IN BOTH U.S. AND IRANIAN INVENTORIES DELIVERIES MIGHT BE EFFECTED MORE RAPIDLY FROM IRAN THROUGH TURKEY (ASSUMING GOT WOULD COOPERATE) THAN FROM U.S. ACCORDINGLY AL-KHALIL SAID GOL WOULD CONTINUE ITS NEGOTIATIONS WITH GOI FOR AS MUCH AS IT COULD GET IN TERMS OF EQUIPMENT AND CREDIT.

5. WHAT ALSO EMERGED FROM DISCUSSION WAS CHAMOUN'S

DEEP DISTRUST OF SYRIA AND CONCERN TIME WAS RUNNING AGAINST LEBANON IN ITS EFFORTS ARM ITSELF AGAINST
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SYRIA AND FEDAYEEN.
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